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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL MEETINGS WITH PARLIAMENT

¶1. (SBU) Summary. In separate meetings with the Speaker of the Senate and the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group on Parliament Hill on October 22, Ambassador underscored the close ties between our two nations, welcomed more legislative exchanges, and responded to concerns about "Buy America" provisions and the "thickening" of the border since 9/11. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Speaker of the Senate Noel Kinsella hosted Ambassador and PolMinCouns to a luncheon on October 22 in his private dining room on Parliament Hill - the same room that Prime Minister Stephen Harper had "borrowed" to give a luncheon for President Obama on February 19. Speaker Kinsella warmly welcomed the Ambassador to Canada and offered the full support and friendship of the Canadian Senate. He expressed a strong hope that Vice President Biden visit Ottawa and make an address to the full Senate, which would be unprecedented. (He also held open the possibility of an eventual address by the President to the combined Senate and House of Commons.) The Speaker and the Ambassador discussed possibilities for encouraging more educational exchanges, with the Speaker expressing particular concern that only about 3 pct of Canadian university students engaged in semesters abroad in any country. In response to questions about "Buy America" provisions in U.S. legislation, the Ambassador noted ongoing positive discussions between USTR Kirk and International Trade Minister Day and their staffs. He welcomed Canada's strong interest in environmental issues, while noting that new U.S. legislation on energy and climate change would likely not be in place before the upcoming Copenhagen Summit.

¶3. (U) Subsequently, the Speaker introduced the Ambassador in the Senate gallery during its daily session, with all of the Senators present giving him a standing ovation of applause.

¶4. (SBU) The Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group (CUSIPG) - with members from both the Senate and the House of Commons - separately hosted a dinner in honor of the Ambassador on October 22. The two co-chairs - Senator Jeremiah Grafstein and MP Gord Brown - offered their warm welcomes and strong hopes for a continued close friendship and partnership between our two nations. Individual members raised several examples of the "thickening" of the border since 9/11 and the negative impact on trade and tourism. The Ambassador underscored the importance of working collaboratively in the common interest in improving efficiency and security on both sides of the border. He responded to several expressions of concern about "Buy America" provisions, while declining to describe the nature of the ongoing discussions. The Ambassador urged the members to introduce and pass improved legislation on intellectual property rights protection. He highlighted the value of close contacts between members of our two countries' legislatures, as well as the CUSIPG's valuable outreach to state governors and legislators.
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